

VZCZCXRO1997
PP RUEHLN RUEHPOD RUEHSK RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHMO #3707/01 3570611
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 220611Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1294
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 003707

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KNNP](#) [ECON](#) [PARM](#) [OREP](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: SENATOR LUGAR MEETS FM LAVROV: U.S. RELATIONS, POST-START,
MD

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a December 18 meeting, FM Lavrov welcomed the visit of Senator Lugar as recognition that the Senate appreciated the importance of relations with Russia. Lavrov emphasized Russia's interest in concluding a post-START treaty by December 2009 and urged a "quick start" to the negotiating process. Criticizing an approach that did not have intrusive verification measures or count non-operationally deployed warheads, Lavrov argued that the U.S. and Russia needed to demonstrate leadership on arms control in advance of the 2010 NPT review. Lavrov charged that U.S. missile defense TCBMs had been watered down since the November 2007 2+2 meeting and expressed hope that the Obama administration would undertake a comprehensive review of its strategy to combat missile proliferation, allowing a return to a more "constructive path." Largely eschewing his trademark sarcasm, Lavrov added MEPP, combating piracy, dealing with the financial crisis, increasing energy security, and resolving the knot of European security issues to a bilateral agenda. He noted the format of the 2+2 dialogue -- if not the results achieved to date -- was useful. In one lapse, Lavrov acerbically thanked the U.S. for preventing Russia's WTO accession, arguing that membership would have intensified Russia's economic downturn. End Summary

U.S.-Russian Relations

¶2. (SBU) In a December 18 meeting with Senator Lugar, SFRC professional staff members, and the Ambassador, FM Lavrov stressed his appreciation for the visit, viewing it as a sign of the Senate's commitment to the continuity and importance of U.S.-Russian relations. Lavrov noted President Medvedev's telephone call to President-elect Obama, where the importance of an early meeting was agreed upon, and commented that Russia hoped to see the approaches and principles enshrined in the April 2008 Sochi Declaration realized. Lavrov emphasized the scope of the bilateral agenda, praised the Senator for his personal contribution to strengthening nuclear nonproliferation cooperation, and said Russia was ready for frank and open talks conducted on the basis of mutual respect and interest. Senator Lugar thanked Lavrov for the spirit of his remarks, noted his role in bringing President-elect Obama to Russia in 2005, and explained that he would confer with the President-elect upon his return to Washington on his impressions of U.S.-Russian relations.

Post-START Tops the Agenda

¶3. (SBU) Senator Lugar expressed hope that the new administration would get off to a strong start, and noted the important opportunity presented by the need to negotiate a post-START agreement by December 2009. Senator Lugar said that he would make his views known on the need to set up quickly a new negotiating team. Achieving a post-START treaty would be a historic accomplishment, both for the bilateral relationship and the international community, and pledged to work closely with the new administration and with Russia to identify multiple venues by which to renew cooperation. Lavrov recalled the Duma's ratification of the six-year extension of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program to 2013 as an example of how "joint ventures" in U.S.-Russian foreign policy were both

successful and critical to world peace.

14. (SBU) Lavrov confirmed Russian interest in early negotiations on a post-START instrument, noting that Moscow had not ruled out reaching an agreement by December 2009. Russia sought a quick start, but Lavrov said he appreciated the President-elect's discipline in not having his advisers engage on foreign policy prior to January 20, noting that his invitation to meet with Secretary-designate Clinton in New York on December 16 had been rebuffed. Lavrov highlighted that it had taken almost a year for the U.S. to produce the post-START proposal first promised at the November 2+2 meeting in Moscow, despite the Presidents' instructions to their teams at Kennebunkport to move forward. Noting U/S Rood's December 15 consultations with DFM Ryabkov, Lavrov said Russia did not see any cardinal change in U.S. position from the one presented a year ago, with the focus on placing limits on operationally deployed warheads.

15. (SBU) Lavrov argued that the logic of making the Moscow Treaty legally binding was a "huge step backward," and criticized the U.S. refusal to count non-operational warheads or to limit deployments to national territories. This posture was bad for prospects of reducing nuclear warheads further, and bad for sending a positive political message in advance of the 2010 NPT review conference. Lavrov maintained that a willingness by the Secretary during the July 2008 ASEAN ministerial to consider including strategic areas in a new treaty was not reflected in the document presented by U/S Rood. Lavrov reiterated Russian concerns over non-nuclear strategic weapons, warning that Russia would have little time to distinguish a conventional missile launched at Osama bin Laden from a nuclear-tipped missile headed for Russian territory, and flagged disappointment over U.S. opposition to Russia's proposal to ban

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strategic weapons from outer space. Lavrov underscored that fundamental differences had not prevented Russia from engaging on post-START; Russia didn't expect a breakthrough under the Bush administration, but believed that all possibilities needed to be exhausted.

16. (SBU) Senator Lugar responded that the Moscow Treaty was "not the last word" in arms control. Lugar emphasized the importance of intrusive verification, attributing CTR's success to the confidence and transparency generated by the strict provisions of the verification regime. Confidence building measures were critical both for the U.S. and Russia, as well as for the international community, which needed to be reassured that the nuclear superpowers were upholding their NPT commitments. A cavalier approach to verification would be a mistake, with Lugar expressing confidence that the U.S. and Russia would be able to move forward. Lavrov interjected that it would be important to expand the disarmament process over time. Noting the mushrooming of nonproliferation initiatives - Global Zero, the Luxembourg Group, the Australian-Japanese Commission - Lavrov said the task was to reach out to the UK, France, and China and encourage them to think in terms of reducing stockpiles. The next circle should include Pakistan, India, and Israel, followed by a policy of engaging threshold countries. The U.S. and Russia should not repeat the mistake made when the NPT was signed, of failing to foresee the need to prohibit enrichment rights. While pursuing the "very long-term" objective of a nuclear free world, it was necessary to ensure that other - equally destructive - weapons did not rise to take their place.

Missile Defense: Need "Constructive Path"

17. (SBU) On missile defense, Lavrov complained that U.S. positions had hardened since the 2+2 November 2007 meeting. Noting the SecDef's offer of a "permanent presence" at the Czech and Polish sites in his meeting with Putin, Lavrov maintained this step would have assuaged, if not removed, Russian concerns. While Russia's preference was for a total re-conceptualization of missile defense, taking into account Moscow's offer of assistance at Qabala and in southern Russia, the offer of permanent presence had impressed Putin. The current proposal of ad hoc visits on the basis of

reciprocity was not a substitute. Lavrov reviewed the history of the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and Putin's warnings to the President that Russia would respond to the development of a U.S. missile defense system. Russia hoped the new administration would adhere to its campaign statements on the need to review the technical and financial feasibility of missile defense, creating a pause in which to shape a new approach. "Hopefully, we can continue on a more constructive path."

U.S.-Russian Architecture

¶8. (SBU) In response to the Senator's question on whether 2+2 served as an appropriate architecture for conducting U.S.-Russian relations, Lavrov said the format was useful, even if the substance had proved disappointing. If the administration was ready to engage, Lavrov repeated, it would find a willing partner in Russia. Lavrov clarified that Russia did not want to limit relations to the strategic sphere, which would suggest a return to the Soviet-U.S. era that was inappropriate given current realities and the prospect for wider cooperation. In addition to arms control, Lavrov identified the following areas for enhanced cooperation:

Bilateral Agenda: MEPP, Piracy, Economy, Energy, Security

¶9. (SBU) Middle East: Lavrov agreed with the Senator that the Middle East should remain an area of U.S.-Russian partnership. Noting his role in securing the December 16 UNSCR on the Middle East peace process - the first in five years - Lavrov suggested that the change in leadership in the U.S., Israel, and potentially Palestine would create a new catalyst for moving forward. Russia was waiting for the results of the Israeli elections. Assuming no radical change in U.S. position, Russia then would be ready to push for a continuation of the Annapolis process. (Lavrov speculated whether Netanyahu's campaign rhetoric suggested a turn away from Annapolis, back to the incremental approach of the road map, and postponement of difficult final status issues.)

¶10. (SBU) Piracy: Lavrov praised the close cooperation that had been struck on Somalia, pointing to the unanimous resolution reached at the UNSC. Addressing the root causes of piracy, and the legal tools to combat it, was an area of overlapping interest.

¶11. (SBU) Economic Security: Senator Lugar noted the uncertainty generated by the world economic crisis, which added a new overlay to the challenges facing world leaders. The Senator recommended a dialogue that assessed what the crisis meant for the average citizen

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in each country. Expressing concern that the downturn could last longer than anticipated, the Senator said Russia and the U.S. needed to find a way back to a world of normal commerce, where Russia continued its progress of integrating into multilateral economic institutions. Commenting that Russia had "jumped" into market mechanisms with little understanding or experience, borrowing from the West's history, Lavrov attributed some of Russia's economic crisis to the lack of development of Russian institutions. In a jab, Lavrov thanked the U.S. for ensuring Russia had not entered the WTO, since membership would have intensified the economic pain caused by the current crisis.

¶12. (SBU) Energy Dialogue: Calling discussions on energy one of the achievements of the Bush-Putin period, Lavrov downplayed the benefits to Russia of last year's high oil prices. Pricing needed to reflect the real economy, and the artificially high prices had reduced incentives to modernize the Russian economy. Lavrov complained about the proliferation of "virtual instruments" that distorted the functioning of the oil market, which Russia had highlighted at the G20 conference. It was not healthy to leave decisions on pricing to OPEC, with Russia falling in line, and Norway contemplating adoption, without a dialogue with the consumers. Lavrov said Putin supported a broader dialogue, involving producers, consumers, and transit countries. Both bilaterally and multilaterally, Russia would support efforts to produce more equitable arrangements.

¶13. (SBU) European Security: Lavrov stressed that, as in the financial sector, the health of one country should not come at the cost of another nation's military and diplomatic well-being. The thrust of Medvedev's European security treaty, he argued, was not to vitiate NATO or the EU, but to bring all parties together to reaffirm this basic principle. Lavrov expressed concern over the conclusions Russia should draw from the U.S. rejection of language at the April NATO summit in Bucharest reaffirming this premise. While partners told Russia that they were satisfied with NATO, Russia did not agree. If the indivisibility of security could not be affirmed, then Russian interests were at risk. Multiple crises underscored the fragility of the system, including the standoff over CFE and the "problems with conflict in this space" (i.e., Georgia). Medvedev's initiative would capture overall security, and could include issues like counter-terrorism and nonproliferation.

¶14. (SBU) NATO Enlargement/Georgia: If the NRC could not convene to discuss the conflict in Georgia, then what was its value? Lavrov laid down a marker that the resumption of NRC activity would need to start with a discussion of what happened in August. NATO would need to answer for why it sought to attract Georgia as a member, when it had over-armed and assaulted its own people. Lavrov charged that a "serious situation" had emerged when a U.S. vessel delivering drinking water to Poti was armed with 52 cruise missiles. With Medvedev only 150 kms away in Sochi, Lavrov questioned whether it was in U.S. and Russian interests to run the risk of even an accidental military escalation. "These are not theoretical concerns." Senator Lugar welcomed conferences where European security could be discussed, but without rehashing debates about Georgia. The Georgia conflict had not been helpful to U.S.-Russia relations of Russian-NATO cooperation. It made sense to look ahead. For those in the U.S. who sought to build relations with Russia, the Georgia conflict had precluded movement on the 123, Jackson-Vanik, and WTO. For those advocating a bipartisan approach to Russia, a positive agenda was essential, and post-START provided an opportunity to refocus forward. The Senator reiterated that U.S.-Russian leadership on critical issues gave confidence to the international community, to which Lavrov concluded the meeting with a forceful "I agree."

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